

THE *Ben Jackson*  
CONDITIONS *1804*  
OF THE  
*Covenant of Grace*

Particularly Explain'd ;  
And the proper Use of  
Natural Conscience  
IN THE  
*Work of our Salvation ;*

Set forth at large in a  
Friendly LETTER

To the Inhabitants of  
The Parish of CHATTERIS in the  
Isle of *ELT*,

FROM

Their near Relation in the Church of *Christ*,  
J. SLATER, A. M. and Author of the  
*Original Draught of the Primitive Church.*

*Slater (1784)*

L O N D O N,

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*My Dear Brethren,*

**T**HE Providence of God, which first ordain'd a Spiritual Relation between us, has seen fit to place me at a Distance from you now; but wherever my Lot falls, I hope my Concern for your eternal Welfare will always be the same; he that heareth Prayer, I trust, will one Day bear witness to this: In the mean time, to give some small Instance of it more immediately to yourselves, I here tender to you a short Scheme of our Christian Duty (drawn up in the vacant Hours of my Retirement) with some peculiar Remarks on the ordinary Occasions of our miscarrying in the Performance of it, principally intended for your spiritual Use and Benefit, that my Pen might supply (in some measure) what my sealed Lips are not otherwise allow'd to do.

Now, to discourse aright in Matters of Religion, as my present Purpose is, I must begin (where all our greatest Undertakings ought to do) with looking closely to the End : And what the End of all Religion is, every Soul (who professes any) will readily agree with me, is to be happy when we dye ; or in the familiar Language of a Christian, to save our immortal Souls for ever.

The short Contents of my friendly Letter to you then, I purpose shall be these.

I. To represent to you, in the plainest Manner that I can, this great and awful Concern of us all, *the saving of our Souls.*

II. To lay before you, the sure Proofs and undeniable Authority we have to convince us all, of the Certainty of an endless Life after Death, and of the vast Concerns that every one of us have therein. And,

III. To shew you what favourable Conditions God requires on our Sides, under the Gospel-Covenant of Grace, for the saving of our Souls for ever. And,

Lastly, To propose some few Rules, highly advisable to be used by you, in order to compass that great End of dying

ing comfortably, and being safe and happy unto all Eternity.

I. To begin with the first of these then. How great and awful a Concern is it to us all, to save our Soul for ever? And I make no doubt, but you'll readily answer this *plain*, though *great* Question, from the greatest to the least of you, that you stedfastly believe and know *this*, to be the highest Concern you have, or can have, in the World. Yet, since a great Apostle could say (in Respect to all the Doctrines of the Christian Faith) that *he would not be negligent to put his People in Remembrance of them, though they knew them before\**. I hope it will not be thought needless in me, to enlarge a little upon so considerable a Subject.

The saving of our Souls, is a Thought, I know, that ever and anon will arise in the busiest Worlding's Mind (let him do what he can;) but how much is imply'd in it, or what Means are to be used, for working out our Salvation, is too slightly considered, I'm afraid, by Men of greater Parts and Leisure, to be thoroughly understood, or practically

\* 2 Pet. i. 2.

known. My Design at present therefore is, to look as far into the true Nature and Means of our Salvation, as the Light of Reason and Revelation together shall direct me (both for your Sakes and my own) and in as few and plain Words as I can, to lay the whole Account before you.

To say any thing in general which God has given us, is, in the first and plainest Sense of it, to put it to such Uses, and improve it to such Advantages, as were intended by him that made us, or in the Nature of the Thing, it is capable of ; for whatsoever Creature of God is debased, corrupted, or degenerates from its own Kind, is plainly so far in its Way to Ruin or Destruction. Now the Souls of Men, we know, are created in the Image of God \* (his own Word assures so) that is, they are *reasonable* and immortal Spirits to be sure, which can distinguish common Good from Evil, and shall never dye ; for nothing less than that can resemble him. Nor has the Fall of *Adam* so destroy'd this original Stamp of practical Reason upon them, but that *Solomon* could call *the Spirit of Man, the Lamp or Candle of*

\* Gen. i. 27.

*the Lord still, even before the Light of the Gospel did appear ; which St. Paul explains in clearer Words to us, when he tells us, that the Gentiles having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves, shewing the Work of the Law written in their Heart, their Conscience also bearing witness, and their Thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another\* : And those Gentiles were as much the Offspring of fallen Adam (to be sure) as we. Give me leave therefore to ask this plain Question of you all ; Whether you don't think this Light of natural Conscience shines as clear in your Christian Hearts at this Day, as the Apostle here tells us it did in all the Heathen World of old ? Do you ever do any Thing in the common and familiar Actions of Life, and not know in your Hearts, whether it be right or wrong, just or unjust, innocent or evil, harmless or injurious to yourselves or others ? 'Tis a shrewd Sign and little less than a Demonstration to me, that something is within you, which shews you all these Things ; since nothing is more common than judging others, and calling this or t'other Person, a good,*

\* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

or bad Man, by what you see them do ; which is an unhappy Use of God's Goodness to us in bestowing the divine Gift of Reason upon our Souls ; but is an open Confession, at the same Time, that we sensibly feel within ourselves, and (even in our own Opinion of it) do think that he has done so ; else we should have little Grounds, or rather none at all, to take up such Opinions and speak so freely as we do, of any other Men ; and no less Evidence of the same Thing, are the ordinary Reproaches of our own Hearts, the Sting of Conscience, and that palpable Self-Condernnation, which ever and anon we feel within ourselves, as often as we sin wilfully, or do any manifestly unreasonable Action whatsoever. As, on the contrary, the comfortable Satisfaction, Content and Approbation of our Hearts, when we do a fair, just and honest Thing, proves as plainly again, that such a Monitor of our Duty, and such a Touch-stone to try Good and Evil by, is form'd and fix'd by our Maker's Hand, in the very Substance of our reasonable Souls.

I may be thought to say too much upon so plain a Point as this ; but the great Subject of our Salvation which I  
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am now upon, obliges me to put you thus particularly in mind, of the true Use and Nature of your Souls; and for no less Reason than this, because the last Sentence upon every Creature at the Day of Judgment, will have a peculiar Regard to the respective Nature, as well as other Gifts, which God has given to them here; and more especially the reasonable Nature of Man v<sup>l</sup> have so mighty an Influence in determining their eternal Happiness or Misery at that Day, that all the Hea-then World (which, if we may judge of Numbers by Length of Time and Extent of Countries, very much exceeds all the rest) will have their final Doom for ever, according to the Use or Abuse of their natural Reason alone; for so the inspir'd Apostle expressly tells us, that *as many as have sinn'd without the Law, shall also perish without Law.\** And let not Jews or Christians therefore, under any Dispensation of Grace whatsoever, vainly think they shall not be called to a strict Account, one Day, for every Sin they commit against that natural Light which God has given them (besides the other Benefits of a higher

\* Rom. ii. 12.

Nature) in common with the others, since so great a Part of Mankind shall be condemn'd for that alone, and *God will be justified* (as holy *David's* Words are) *when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth* \*.

And the practical Use I make of this, in the great Affair of your Salvation, is, seriously to warn you all, how dangerous a thing it is, in your common Employments or daily Conversation in the World to slight natural Conscience, or venture upon any Action, which your own Hearts misgive you in, how loudly soever the common Practice of the World may recommend it to you, and your own Hearts perhaps but softly whisper within you, that it is not good, safe, or warrantable to be done, for after that manner indeed right Reason always speaks to Men; even as God himself did to the great Prophet of old †; not in a Hurricane of Storm, Fire, or Earth-quake, but in a still small Voice; and happy are they who listen to that, as the blessed *Elijah* did to that Call of God: For 'tis incredible, what a hopeful Progress you would make every Day in the Work of your Salvation, if you kept to this

\* Psal. li. 4.

† 1 Kings xix. 12.

plain Rule alone ; as, on the contrary, 'tis Matter of the greatest Danger, and hardly consistent with the saving of Men's Souls, to them that mind it not.

And two Sorts of Men are more immediately concern'd to lay this Truth to Heart, if ever they hope to give a tolerable Account to God, for making them reasonable Creatures, which we see all Men must one Day surely do.

I. All those over-busy, laborious Worldlings, who appear careful above all others, but in Truth are too thoughtless and inconsiderate Christians at the best, who toil to Day as they did Yesterday, and are prepared to do just the same to Morrow, in an eager Pursuit of every gainful Advantage and Improvement that Stock, Trade, Husbandry, Markets or Bargains, put in their way, till the Day itself fails them, or their Strength can bear no more ; or, if a leisure Hour be still left, they tamely strike in and close with any idle Company or unprofitable Pastime, that Chance or Temptation shall unhappily offer to them : Such I have observ'd in the World abroad, and I heartily wish there were none amongst our selves ; for where so strong an Inclination is, to thrive faster,  
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and get a larger Portion of the World than the rest that are about them, 'tis greatly to be fear'd they must be less at Leisure (and less dispos'd too) to commune with their own Hearts, and conscientiously enquire there, what moral Good or Evil, what strict Justice or Honesty there is in every Action of the Day; and more especially, where few or (peradventure) no Minutes at all are allow'd by them, in the whole, to reflect in some Retirement or another, and consider seriously with themselves what the End or Consequence will be of every thing they have been doing, in Relation to their Account with God, and the saving of their Souls.

By such Neglect of natural Conscience, and not so much as consulting the plain Rules of their own Reason within them, which may be learnt without Book or Letters, (by the easy Task of thinking only) 'tis sad to observe, what dangerous Sins, insinuate themselves into the Lives and Practices of too many Men: For no otherwise than so, could secret Frauds and Deceit, Falseness and Hypocrisy, Injustice and Oppression, Unfaithfulness and Over-reaching of others in Trade, Trust, Bargain, Contract, or the like, abound so much, and pass so current

rent as they do ; to the utter Ruin of such thoughtless (and otherwise perhaps well-meaning Souls) as we are speaking of now. For who could be ignorant, that did but lay his Hand upon his Heart, and consult no other Casuist than his own Conscience there, that these and such like daily Practices of crafty Chapmen, sharpening Traders, hard Usurers, and other Worldlings of every Kind, are universally condemn'd as sinful and unjustifiable Ways of dealing, by the common Sense and Reason of all Mankind. And thus the Salvation of many Souls is brought to the last Degree of Danger, and hard to be recovered (so long as they go on so) merely for not making a due Use of that natural Reason, which God stamp't upon them at their first Creation, and even after the Fall, is thus far remaining in them still. But,

2<sup>ly</sup>. Another Sort of Men there is, who think more, and reason better in the ordinary Affairs of common Conversation than those others do, who make a fairer Appearance of an ingenuous Education, of natural Parts, and a creditable Capacity for any useful Business in the World that lyes in their way ; yet by meeting with Temptations

to sensual Pleasure on every hand of them (as the manner of Business indeed, as well as Idleness is, in our Days, to offer many to them) and finding a forward Inclination of corrupted Nature within them, ready to comply and close with them ; they drop that inward Guide, for the time, which God appointed for them ; fall in Love with present Pleasure (as 'tis too natural to do) and observing that the common Libertines, and Sons of Mirth and good Fellowship, seem to have the largest Portion of it, they unwarily cast their Lot amongst them, and by dint of good Nature (as they are willing to think it) or from a well-bred Principle (as the World has made it) *not to break Company*, they yield to the flattering Temptation, consent to do as others do, and make themselves one with them ; till by insensible Degrees, they come from moderate and cautious good Fellowship at first, to a downright Habit of gratifying their Appetites as freely to the full, as they see the Generality of the World about them, without Remorse or Scruple at it, so chearfully and contentedly do.

And though *these* are too quick of Apprehension, not to hear the inward Whif-

Whispers of natural Conscience ever and anon giving Alarm; yet in that Civil War between the Law of the Members and the Law of the Mind (as *St. Paul* expresses it) Appetite and Habit together, get so entire a Victory, that they silence and bear down that faithful Monitor within them, till they insensibly bring the unwary Soul into Captivity to the Law of Sin: For nothing less comes of it, when Conscience is thus laid asleep, than a ready Resolution to humour every Inclination to present Pleasure (be it what it will) that either a Man's own Flesh and Blood, or the flattering Temptations of riotous or wanton Company shall sollicite or invite him to. And from hence come Drunkenness, Intemperance, Wantonness, Adultery, Fornication, common Swearing, Strife, Quarrelling, and too often, the crying Sin of Murder too, which are the highest Instances wherein humane Nature (as such) can abuse their reasonable Souls, or offend their God: And by the little which has been said, I think it's very plain, that if the Admonitions of natural Conscience were soberly attended to, from the first Rise and Progress, to the last end and finishing of this Course of Life, the Souls of

many such endanger'd Sinners might be kept in a hopeful Way of Salvation ; as I have shewn you the former Sort of Men, might by the same Means be safe, and in the right Way to eternal Happiness too : Whereas by the Neglect and slighting of it, these latter are in Danger of hearing a more unanswerable Charge against them at the last Day than the former may do, by how much their Advantages are in many Respects the greater of the two.

Thus far I thought fit to hint to you, the Advantage that might be made of that natural Reason, wherewith our bountiful Creator enrich'd our Souls, towards the eternal Salvation of them ; and I affectionately recommend it to the serious Consideration of you all.

The other Dignity arising from God's Image in us, is this, that our Souls are immortal, and shall never dye, which is as strong a Motive (one would think) as Infinite Wisdom could offer, to engage us to an awful Care and perpetual Watchfulness over all our Ways, that we endanger not at any time the Welfare of our Souls, since (by this Necessity of Nature) they must remain to all Eternity, what we fit them for, by the Use we make of them in our time of Trial  
here :

here : Which is in plain Terms, as Divine Revelation assures us, either for everlasting Happiness and Joy in Fellowship and Communion with all reasonable, righteous and holy Spirits above, (even God himself, the Lord *Jesus Christ*, the ever blessed Angels, and the glorified Saints of our own Nature) if we make Innocence, Holiness and Virtue the Choice of our Wills, and Practice of our Lives, to qualify us for so bless'd an Eternity : Or otherwise for Sufferings and Misery insupportable (as endless as the other) if we debase the Excellency of our Heaven-born Nature, turn the Bent and Byass of our reasonable Souls to the Love of sensual and brutish Pleasure, prefer the Wages of Sin here upon Earth for a few Moments, before the Rewards of Righteousness insured to us in Heaven for ever : For such a Course of Life (your selves being Judges) must directly fit us for the Company of fallen Angels only, who rebelled against God from the Beginning, and of such miserable Children of Men, who would not continue in the Use of that reasonable Nature, wherein God created them, though they had the additional Gifts of Grace too for making their natural Immortality a ne-

ver ending Blessing to them, as God intended it should be.

And that the Soul of Man itself is inwardly conscious and sensible of such a native Immortality essentially belonging to it, is manifest, by the Sentiments of the wise and thinking Heathens of old; whose natural Divinity (without Prophecy or Revelation to guide them) abounds with Variety of Notions about the different State and Condition of good and bad Men's Souls after their Separation from the Body. Delightful Mansions of Joy and Pleasure on one hand, and doleful Abodes of Misery and Torture on the other, for departed Souls respectively to dwell in, in another World, are familiarly to be read and met with in the Records and Histories of their Times; nay, most of the Gods they generally worship'd, were no other (in their own Opinion of them) than some great Heroes, Princes, or other Persons of Renown, who had once lived amongst them, and after Death were translated (as they conceiv'd) to some eminent Constellation, Planet, or other bright and shining Body in the Heavens, for their great Excellency and Preeminence above others here upon Earth; and for that Reason they built Altars to their Honour, offer'd

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Sacrifice, and worshipped them. Which shews that they discover'd, not only the Immortality of their Souls, but in the very Nature of the thing itself, Rewards and Punishments, Happiness and Misery too, according to the Use or Abuse of those transcendent Powers and Faculties which they plainly saw God had given to the reasoning Souls of Men above every kind of Creature in the visible Creation beside.

But I will not insist upon the strongest Arguments of Men for this momentous Truth of the Immortality of our Souls, since the God of Truth himself has so graciously vouchsafed to clear up all Objections against it, and infallibly confirm'd it to us. And this leads me to the second general Head of my Discourse, which is this :

II. To lay before you the sure Proofs and undeniable Authority we Christians have, to convince us all of the Certainty of a Life to come, and of the great Concerns that every one of us have therein.

Now this is an Enquiry (you'll readily agree) which plainly relates to a World we never yet saw, nor, in the Nature of the thing, possibly can see, till corruptible Flesh shall put on Incorruption :

corruption : For this is what our blessed Saviour said, as well to his sanctify'd Apostles, as to the unbelieving *Jews*, a little while before his Return into that other World from whence he came; *As I said unto the Jews* (said he) *whither I go, you cannot come, so now say I unto you\**; and presently after, he more expressly told St. Peter, *Whither I go thou can'st not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards*; plainly shewing them, that till their *Mortality should be swallowed up of Life†*, and that is at their Resurrection from the Dead, there could be no Entrance for their Flesh and Blood into that spiritual and eternal Kingdom. And since a sensible View then, or a present Vision of it is not to be had here, what Means, can our own Hearts conceive, should God Almighty himself use to assure the Sons of Men upon Earth, of such another World to come, and of the everlasting Concern of every one of us there? Could an express Messenger from himself give us any Satisfaction about it? In some measure, you will surely say, it might; provided we could have unquestionable Proof, that he was a true and faithful

\* Joh. xiii. 33, 36.

† 2 Cor. v. 4.

one; and be as certain also that he really came from thence, and perfectly knew all Things that are there: For in Things unseen, and in Places unknown, this is the highest Evidence imaginable that can be given of them: And upon such Grounds as this it is that Mankind chearfully go on in their temporal and civil Affairs, even when they are of very great Moment to them. Thus (for Instance) whole States and Kingdoms, we know, in these latter Ages of ours, have not only hearken'd to creditable Men's Reports, but have made large Adventures, and settled costly Traffick in Countries vastly distant from them, crossed dangerous and terrible Seas, never known or seen by them, upon the bare Authority of some credible Informers, who told them they came from thence, and had been Eye-Witnesses of the profitable Fruits and Treasures of those foreign Countries where they had been. For after this Manner, the rich and mighty Trade of both the *Indies* at first began; and in doing so the Event proves they went advisably on; for 'tis well known to what considerable Advantage it has turn'd. In like Manner, do not the greatest Kings and Princes of this World take their usual

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Measures of civil Policy and Practice, make Peace and War, seal Confederacies and Alliances, forbid or allow of Trade and Commerce, and do many such like publick Acts of Government, of the highest Importance to themselves and Subjects, upon the credible Information of their respective Envoys or Ambassadors, or other credible Subjects residing in the Courts or Countries of foreign Princes, as far distant from them perhaps as the Earth almost extends, and which they never saw themselves, or ever think to see? Such rational Evidence does all Mankind allow a creditable Testimony to be, of Things unseen.

And now (my dear Brethren) think seriously, and judge as becomes Men, whilst I apply these familiar Observations, to the great and momentous Subject which I have in Hand; excusing only the Disproportion of Comparisons, since an equal Similitude in our great Case, can't possibly be found.

Our Enquiries are, What Certainty have we, whilst we live here, of living any more after Death? What manner of Place is that unseen World we are then to go to? And what will the respective Lot and Portion of every one of us (and of all Mankind with us) assuredly

assuredly be, when we leave this World and get thither? These are the great Questions before us. And to answer with as much Reference to the foregoing Instances, as the Thing will bear; we have surely had a Messenger, and in the highest Character of a divine Ambassador from the King of Heaven too, clothed with Flesh and Blood like ourselves, that he might the more familiarly discourse with us about these great, invisible and eternal Things; and sent as surely to us from that unknown World, we are so highly desirous to be inform'd of (and more surely too) than any mortal Man whatsoever could possibly satisfy us, that he came from any foreign Country upon Earth to this our native Land; for that the blessed *Jesus*, the Author of our Faith and Finisher of our Salvation, was infallibly such an one, the unexceptionable Testimonials he brought along with him (which I am now about to lay before you) I make no Question will convince you all, to the full. For what were the Testimonials the Lord *Jesus* brought from Heaven with him, to demonstrate to all the World, who he was, and from whence he came? Were they his own solemn Affirmation only in the Case? No! He trusted  
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not to that, though he truly told the *Jews*, that if he bore Record of himself, his Record was true, because the Almighty Father was with him. Were they a Cloud of other Witnesses then to vouch for his Fidelity and Truth in all that he said or did? He depended not on that neither; though he often and unanswerably appeal'd to the Testimony of *Moses* and the Prophets, and of St. *John Baptist* concerning himself, who was the greatest Person at that Time, that had been born of a Woman. Were they Letters Patent then signed and sealed (like the ten Commandments of that Law) by the Hand of God, the King of Heaven himself, from whom he came? Not so neither; though such Credentials are the highest Evidence, that the wisest Princes upon Earth do put their Trust in; but whether written with Ink and Pen, or graven with Steel or Diamond, the atheistical Scepticks of the World, would censure them, as liable to Counterfeit or Forgery through the Wickedness and Craft of Men.

What were the Testimonials then, the uncontestable Testimonials (I must call them) not possible to be gainsaid by Angels or Men, which the blessed *Jesus* brought with him, to win the Faith of

all Mankind to every Thing he said or did, in the open View of the World?

Attend, wonder and believe with Comfort (O my Christian Brethren) for they were nothing less than downright *Omnipotency*, or a manifest Almighty Power, apparently invested in his own Person, by which he demonstrably prov'd, and beyond all Possibility of Exception, that he not only came from the one only true God, Creator and Governor of the World, but did equally partake with him also in his absolute Sovereignty over it. Nor can it possibly be less than so, if an Apostle may have any Credit with us, who expressly tells us, *that by that very Jesus were all Things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, whether they be Thrones or Dominions, or Principalities or Powers, all Things were created by him and for him* \*; and if such created Power be not Almighty, we shall talk but weakly (I am sure) either of Religion or of God. Yet, if we want more sensible Conviction in the Case, does not Matter of Fact prove the same Thing of him, in his lowest State of Humiliation upon Earth? For what Creature, which

\* Col. i. 16.

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offer'd itself to him, for Tryal of his Power here, did not own and testify his uncontrollable Dominion over them? With Authority he commanded unclean Spirits, and they obey'd him, (*Mark i. 27.*) Nay they own'd his Godhead openly, and fear'd he came to torment them, (*Matt. viii. 29.*) He rebuked the stormy Wind and raging Waves of the Sea, which mock at the Cries and Fears of Men, but at his Word in a Moment became calm and still, (*Matt. viii. 26.*) He cured all Diseases of Men, with no artful Application for that end, but by his Word alone; barely saying, I will, be thou healed, or, be thou clean, (*Matt. viii. 3. Luke v. 17, &c.*) He prov'd his unconfined Presence, as well within us as without us, by discerning the unutter'd Thoughts of Men's Hearts, (*Matt. ix. 4. Luke v. 22.*) Moreover, he rais'd up dead Bodies, and commanded the departed Souls to return again from the other World to them, (*Matt. ix. 25. John xi. 43, 44.*) And, which neither *Moses*, nor the Prophets, nor the Patriarchs of old could do, though the dearest Friends of God in all Ages; he gave Commission and Authority to his Disciples, who believ'd in him, to do the same Things, and greater

greater Works too, by the Virtue of a Word alone in his Name; (*John xiv. 12. Acts iv. 10.*) you must not start against this Pause here then (my dear Brethren) and exercise your deepest Meditations upon this great Subject for a while! Consider seriously within yourselves, what a solid Foundation of unerring Truth, every Article of your Christian Faith, and every Doctrine of the Gospel in the New Testament are built upon! for they are nothing less than the very secret Counsels of God himself, taken in the Court of Heaven from the Foundation of the World, for the Redemption and Salvation of fallen Man, and publish'd to the Inhabitants of the Earth below, by this divine Ambassador we have now been speaking of, who was himself immediately present at them all; and by Signs, Prophecies, Miracles, and Power unimitable by any created Being whatsoever, openly declared and proved himself to be the very eternal Son of God, coequal with the Father, in Power and Majesty, in Truth and Wisdom too; so that 'tis a Contradiction to natural Sense and Reason, as well as horrid Blasphemy, to think he could deceive or misinform us, in any Thing that he deliver'd to us.

Would you be fully settled in your Minds then of the Certainty of all things that concern you in the World to come? In God's Name consult and study that authentick Memorial of them all, which this blessed *Jesus* delivered to his Church from his own Mouth, whilst he lived here below, and took Care that his inspired Evangelists and Apostles, by the Guidance of the Holy Ghost, should leave them on Record for us for ever, in the Books of the New Testament: Search those Holy Scriptures, and in them you'll plainly find you have eternal Life reveal'd to you: And if you bear in Mind from what Hand they come, you must either give up your Faith to what is written in them, or unavoidably confess, that Omnipotency it self can't cure such Infidelity, or find out Means sufficient to convince such unbelieving Souls; since no less a Trial has actually been made of us by what the Almighty *Jesus* said and did amongst us here below.

And to point out more particularly to you, the Resolution he has given us of the two great Christian Truths before us; namely, the Immortality of our Souls, and the Resurrection from the Dead, I can't but recommend to your  
serious

serious Consideration, one remarkable Discourse he had with the *Sadducees* of his time upon those important Subjects, because it is a short and full Determination for us both of one and the other.

That Sect of Hereticks amongst the *Jews* denyed both these Truths, and openly professed there was no Resurrection, neither Angel nor Spirit (of any kind whatsoever) amongst all the Creatures of God, though the *Pharisees* confessed both: Thus the sacred Text tells us of them (*Acts* xxiii. 8:) and so confident were they in that Heresie of theirs, that they ventur'd to dispute the Blessed *Jesus* about it: He, according to his wonted Authority and Zeal for Truth, immediately rebuked their Mistake, and in few Words (but very plain and positive ones) flatly told them to their Face, *You do err* (says he) *not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God\**; plainly enough declaring to them, that that Mistake of theirs, was both contrary to God's own Words, and an Atheistical Reflection on his Power too. An Answer (every one must see) sufficient to silence them, and to establish

\* *Mat.* xxii. 29.

the contrary Truth to us all, had he said no more: But, to set them righter still in such necessary and important Truths as these, he condescended farther, to consider their mean Objections against them; and to give them so much Light into the true State and Condition of Mankind in that other World (which they were ignorant of before) as made their Arguments immediately appear insignificant, and wholly foreign to the Nature of the thing: For they argued (as you know the holy Scripture tells us) from such temporal Relations only of Mankind in this Life, as marrying and giving in Marriage are, from whence they could conceive no otherwise, but that great Absurdity and Confusion would arise in some such Cases, as they mention'd to him, if we should ever meet together in the same Relation and Capacity again: To which the Answer of our blessed Lord (who knew the Condition of Mankind in that other World, as well as here) was plain and full; assuring them at once, that such Relations and Capacities as those, should at the Resurrection for ever have an end; and though the same Persons should certainly be raised again, which lived here before, yet their State of Life then,

as well as the corruptible Substance of their Bodies, should be so improv'd and dignify'd then, by him that made them and rais'd them from the Grave, that they should be like the very Angels in Heaven, who have no such Relations amongst any Orders of them, but remain unchangeably the same, both in their Number and immortal Nature too, without ever dying, or increasing of their Kind; and so shall Men do too (says he) in that other World, where the Number of God's elected Saints, intended to dwell with him in Heaven for ever, shall be perfectly compleat and full; and consequently no Increase or Propagation of Men to take place there.

Thus he determin'd the first important Truth in Dispute between them, *The Certainty of the Resurrection of the Dead.* And perfectly agreeable to his Determination of it, is his great Apostle's Doctrine of it, where he treats at large about the same Subject: For in the Resurrection (says St. Paul) *this mortal Body shall put on Immortality, and this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and this natural Body shall then be raised a spiritual Body: A Change!* which we can't but see must advance the Nature of Man as near as possibly can be

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conceived, to the very Nature of the Angels themselves; for to be incorruptible, immortal and spiritual Beings for ever in our own Persons, comes up to the fullest Account that Divine Revelation gives us of that highest Order of Creatures amongst all the Works of God. But then,

2. As to the Immortality of the Soul, even in it's own Nature, and before the Resurrection of the Dead, through the Image of God stamp'd upon it at the first Creation, he confutes the same Adversaries from the very Words of God himself out of the Books of *Moses* (the avow'd Law-giver to all the Nation of the *Jews*) where God proclaims himself, the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*, (that is, of Men, who for many Generations before had been dead and bury'd amongst them) and yet God (says he) *is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto him*; wherefore you do greatly err, (says he) repeating that mild Rebuke again, in thinking that temporal Death here puts an end to the Life and Being of the Souls of Men for ever.

Thus he put to Silence those here-

\*Mark. xii. 27.

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tical Sadducees \* (as the Texts immediately following do tell us) and made the Multitudes about him astonish'd at the Evidence and Power of his unanswerable Arguments.

But if positive and plain Words affect you more, mind how the Divine Jesus delivers these great Truths in such familiar Terms at other times, that his meanest Hearers could not possibly mistake him: *The Hour is coming* (says he) *in the which all that are in the Graves shall bear the Voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil unto the Resurrection of Damnation* †. And again, in his Explication of the Parable of the good Seed and the Tares of the Field, *As the Tares are gather'd* (says he) *and burnt in the Fire, so shall it be at the end of this World. The Son of Man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do Iniquity, and shall cast them into a Furnace of Fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth; then shall the Righteous shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their*

\* Mat. xxii. 33, 34. † Joh. v. 28, 29.

Father; who hath Ears to hear, let him hear\*. And not less sensible Instruction sure, is that awful Relation of the rich Man and Lazarus in the Gospel†; for Lazarus was dead, said the blessed Jesus, and the rich Man dead and bury'd too; yet both were seen alive again, the one in Abraham's blissful Bosom, full of heavenly Joy, the other dreadfully tormented in scorching Flames.

Thus has this Divine Embassador from Heaven drawn aside the Veil (I may say) between this visible World and that which is to come; and given us as clear a Prospect of the State and Condition of all Mankind after their Resurrection from the Grave, as can any ways concern us to know, or our imperfect Faculties indeed could possibly receive here: For we know but little of our selves, if we should ask or desire a clearer View of it, since an inspir'd Apostle has told us, That Eye has not seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive, the things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him.

Let no Man deceive you therefore

\* Mat. xiii. 41. to, v. 44.

† Luke xvi. 19. to v. 25.

(my dear Brethren) with flattering or vain Words; neither let your own partial Hearts, or the Sceptical disputing Age you live in, abuse you with any wavering, doubtful or unsettled Imaginations about these great and momentous Truths I have been speaking of; for the God of Truth himself has assured us, once for all, and that with uncontestable Evidence and Authority too, that to one or other of these two endless States of Life hereafter, all Mankind shall certainly be sentenc'd at the last Day, according as we have done Good or Evil, whilst we lived here.

If any farther Question can remain, to settle our Hopes or Fears of what is likely to become of us when we die, 'tis what the wise Ruler of the *Jews* asked our blessed Saviour, as the last Satisfaction he requir'd of him in this great Affair; *Good Master, said he, what shall I do, that I may obtain eternal Life?* As if he had further said, I make no doubt now, by what I have heard and seen of you, of such a Life to come; but what does God require of me, that I may obtain the Happiness and avoid the Misery of it? An Enquiry of near Concern to us all; and the Answer which our blessed Lord gave to that inquisitive *Jew*, is  
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what I promised in my third general Proposition more particularly to explain to you, as you bear the Name of Christians, and desire to live and dye in the comfortable Hopes of that most holy Profession.

III. For my third Proposition you may remember was this, To shew you what Conditions God requires of us under the Gospel-Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, for a full Discharge of our Christian Duty in this Life, and for the saving of our Souls for ever in the Life to come.

Now these Conditions lye dispersed throughout the whole New Testament. But to represent them to you in the narrowest Compass I can, I choose to lay before you the short Account a great Apostle gives us of them, in the first Christian Sermon that ever was preached after the Holy Ghost came down from Heaven to teach all Mankind their Way thither, together with the practical Use his Auditors made of that Sermon, in order to follow the Directions he had given them for it, which is the earliest and most authentick Precedent (I think) that we can look for of our Christian Obligations under this Covenant of Grace.

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The Sermon I recommend to you upon this Account is in the second Chapter of the *Acts of the Holy Apostles*, preach'd by *St. Peter*, all the Apostles being present with him ; and on the very Day of *Pentecost* (or first Christian *Whitsunday*) when the Holy Ghost descended in the Shape of Fiery Tongues, upon these Embassadors of *Christ*, sent to propagate the Gospel-Covenant throughout the World : The Auditors were thousands of Jews and Profelytes assembled at *Jerusalem* from all Countries round about it, to celebrate their solemn Festival there ; and amongst them were the very Murderers of the Holy Jesus himself. *St. Peter* with an Apostolical Plainness and Authority spared not to tell them to their Face, who and what that Jesus was, whom they had crucified ; assuring them in few Words, that God had raised him from the dead, exalted him to his own right Hand in Heaven, and made him both *Lord* and *Christ* ; that is (as he meant it, and they understood it) he was the true *Messiah* or anointed Son of God, whom *Moses* and all their Prophets pointed at, and they themselves at that very time were expecting should come, to deliver *Israel*, and all that would believe in him, from all their Sins. And

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how do we read those guilty Auditors receiv'd that unanswerable Truth, so powerfully attested to them? The Text tells us, *They were pricked to the Heart*: Their Consciences upbraided them (it seems) with all their former Sins, and more immediately with their obstinate Infidelity and cruel Usage of so innocent and divine a Person, after all that they had seen and heard concerning him before; insomuch that forthwith, and without Delay, they became Believers; and wanted nothing now to know farther, but how they might continue so, and be made Partakers of that Salvation, which was preach'd to them in the Name of that very Jesus; for so the Text tells us of them again; *Men and Brethren*, said they, *what shall we do?* In which Question of theirs is plainly contain'd the whole Enquiry we are now upon; for 'tis as much as if they had expressly said, What Conditions, O ye holy Messengers of God, are requir'd of Us Sinners by this Covenant of Grace you preach to us, to make us Partakers of the eternal Benefits of it? The Apostle's Answer therefore and their immediate Practice upon it, we have good Reason to believe, set forth those Conditions to the full; and therefore I shall more parti-

particularly explain to you, both one and t'other, as I find them recorded for us in the same Chapter, wherein this whole Relation lies.

The Apostle's Answer then to their Question was this: *Repent*, said he, *and be baptized every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the Remission of Sins, and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost.* Observe, I beseech you, (my beloved Brethren) that *Repentance and Baptism* are here proclaimed by an Apostle (at the first opening of his Mouth to teach the unconverted World their Way to Salvation) as two indispensable Conditions of having any Interest in the Covenant of Grace, or being reconcil'd to God in his Son Jesus. I shall farther enlarge upon these Conditions by and by: In the mean time, that the Doctrine of this inspired Preacher here, and the practical Use which his zealous Auditor's made of all that he taught them, may the more closely lye before you at one View, I shall mention also those first Converts immediate Practice upon it, and then mark out to you the several Conditions of our Christian Duty, contain'd in the whole, as an approv'd Original (I conceive) of what the Covenant of Grace requires of us all.

The immediate Use then, those first Converts made of all the Apostles preach'd to them was this: *Then they that gladly receiv'd the Word were baptized, and the same Day there were added to them about three thousand Souls; and they continu'd stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers.*

Here's a full and authentick Abstract (I may say) of the special Conditions that the Christian Religion (as such) does punctually exact and require of all that make Profession of it, in order to qualify themselves for the Benefits which the Son of God purchased for them. And I would immediately mark them, one by one, and explain them to you; but that I foresee a Prejudice which 'tis peculiarly seasonable, in this Place, first to remove. For some Men there are, who by an unwary and mistaken Apprehension of this Passage of holy Scripture I am now explaining to you, finding that the Jewish Auditors did profess their Belief in the divine Jesus, whom St. Peter preach'd to them, and repented of their Sins also, before they were baptized; take Occasion from hence rashly to reproach and speak evil of the universal Practice of the primitive, as well as present Church of Christ, for baptizing Infants, before they can perform either.

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In Answer to which unjust Prejudice and Exception of theirs, I desire you (my beloved Brethren) carefully to observe and weigh, the plain and manifest Difference between the Case of these first Converts, and of all the succeeding Ages of the Church after them ; by which you will see the important Reasons which induc'd the Church of God, in the very earliest and purest Times of it (even before the Gift of Miracles ceased amongst them) to bring their Infants to holy Baptism, and seal them with that Seal of the Covenant, for the greater Safety of their Souls.

The Difference then, between the one and t'other, was this ; that forasmuch as there was no such Thing as a Christian Church upon Earth, for those first Converts to be admitted into, at the Time when they first came into the World ; nor could they be born of Christian Parents (to whose Seed the Promise of the Covenant was peculiarly made) because there could be no such Persons as Believers in Being at that Time ; nor consequently any competent Trustees or Sureties, for them to offer, or the Church to accept, for their Sincerity and Perseverance in the true Faith, because the whole World, besides themselves, were either Jews or Heathens still: For these and such like Reasons, it was highly necessary

cessary (we all agree) that those first Converts should in their own Persons, declare their Belief of that blessed Jesus, whom either by Suffrage or by Silence they themselves had crucified, and openly repent them of their Sins, before they were admitted to the inestimable Benefits of that divine Redeemer, to whom they could have no Shew of Title, or any hereditary Relation to his Church, which they were then by Baptism about to enter into.

Whereas, in all succeeding Ages of the Church, the Case was vastly different in every one of these Particulars. There were Churches soon planted in every noted Country upon Earth; and Believers daily multiplying in them, to some thousands in a Day; so that every Child that was born amongst them (if we will believe *St. Paul*) was sanctified from the Womb; yea, though but one Parent of the two, were professed Believers in the Lord *Jesus*; for so that great Apostle expressly affirms it to be, (*1 Cor. vii. 14.*) Which holy Birth-right, under our *Covenant of Grace*, could surely be of no less Benefit to the Posterity of Christians, than under the *Jewish Covenant of Works* it was of old, when God himself ordain'd, that Birth-right only; or barely descending from the Stock  
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*Abraham*, should intitle the Seed of *Jacob* to his Sacrament of Circumcision, and bring their very Infants into Covenant with him. And I would fain ask such unfortunate Dissenters from the universal Practice of the Church of *Christ*, who surely own, or must own, that original Sin in *Adam* deriv'd Infection to his whole Seed, from the Fall to the very End of the World; which God himself by providing a Saviour necessary for us all, confirms to be true: I would fain ask such Men (I say) what solid Reason they can give for not believing also, that Christian Faith in the Parents should derive a Title to covenanted Mercies on their Children, where the same God is a Party in the Covenant too? To believe the harder Dispensation of divine Providence, and deny the more favourable one, is an Opinion (one would think) should meet with little Countenance; unless in unbelieving Nations, where either the Essence or the Attributes of the Almighty are not own'd. I might add to this, our blessed Saviour's manifest Encouragement of it, by his own Practice towards these harmless Infant-Souls, commanding little Children to be brought to him, and declaring them to be Subjects of the *Kingdom of Heaven*, which, in his own Language implies as much, as that they were

were proper Members for the Church of God here, and also qualified to be Saints above hereafter ; such is his familiar Notion of the *Kingdom of Heaven*, in his own most holy Gospel : And this Mark of Approbation he was pleas'd to shew, even when his own Disciples, in a warm Zeal, without a due Knowledge of their Master's Will (after the Manner of these prejudiced Christians now a Days) presumptuously forbad it to be so. But I hope what I have said to you, as briefly as I can, will satisfy you all, of the sufficient Reasons and Authority, which moved the primitive, as well as present Church, to bring their Infants unto holy Baptism, for their more perfect Title to the Covenant of Grace. More might be said, even from the Authority of holy Scripture itself ; but this seasonable Digression (for such, at least, I thought it to be) has detain'd me too long, from marking out to you, one by one, all the indispensable Conditions this Covenant of Grace requires of us, in order to live and dye in due Communion with the Church of *Christ* in this World, and to reap all the eternal Benefits purchased by his Death for us, in the World to come. And this I shall now do for you (God willing) as fully and faithfully as I can.

Namely,

Namely, Baptism, Faith and Repen-  
tance.

A stedfast Continuance in the Apostle's  
Doctrine.

A close Fellowship or Communion with  
them, in the Church of their plan-  
ting in the World.

Partaking constantly there in breaking  
of Bread together (after their Exam-  
ples ;) that is, in the holy Sacrament  
of the Lord's Supper.

And lastly, in publick Prayers also. For  
the holy Text tells us, they continu-  
ed stedfastly in all these Things.

These fundamental Conditions then, re-  
quir'd of us in the Christian Covenant of  
Grace, I shall singly explain to you, as I  
find them plainly contain'd in the New Te-  
stament, which by God's good Providence  
to you, is familiarly to be found in all your  
Hands.

And I begin, where the Church so war-  
rantably does, with the Duty of *Holy Bap-  
tism*. Wherein the Scripture is so clear,  
that the very Form of it is given us there  
from the Son of God's own Mouth, in  
these express Words to all his Apostles;  
*Go and make all Nations my Disciples*  
(for so the original Word imports) *bap-  
tizing*

tizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And the Matter, with which it is to be administer'd is as plainly taught us by his great Apostle St. Peter; who, upon Notice by an Angel, was called to make the Heathen Family of *Cornelius* become Christians (which by the way, were the first Converts from the Heathen World too;) and having convinc'd them of the Truth of the Gospel he preached (as he had done to the *Jews* before) he calls for *Water* to baptize them withal, even though they were baptized by the Holy Ghost in a miraculous Manner before; for so the Text it self tells us, as quoted here in the Margin: Yet notwithstanding that, *Who can forbid Water* (says the Apostle) *that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we* \*. Thus were the very Form and Matter of this necessary Sacrament so authentickly deliver'd unto us that the Church might more punctually administer the same in all succeeding Ages to the World's End.

And I make no question (my beloved Brethren) but by the bare Relation of this sacred Pattern of Apostolical Baptism,

\* Acts, x. 44, 46.

which

which was in direct Obedience, to be sure, to their Lord and Master's express Commission to them all, you can't but reflect, and wonder at two sorts of Men amongst your selves, who name themselves Christians too.

I. Those unaccountable Despisers of this Divine Sacrament of Christian Baptism, who desperately venture to live and dye, without any Use or Hope of Benefit by it; and suffer their innocent (but highly injur'd) Children to do so too, rather than believe that washing with Water (be it from the consecrated Fountain in the House of God, or in any other warranted Place) should in any wise be instrumental to the washing away of Sin, though the Son of God himself, you see, ordain'd it for that very Use, and his inspired Apostle practis'd it accordingly, who receiv'd his Commission immediately from him. A desperate Defiance surely to the Power and Truth, and Wisdom of Almighty God himself; as if he could not, or would not make good his own Ordinances to such Effects and Uses as he manifestly commanded and appointed them for. Just as the scoffing Heathen *Naaman*, you know, mocked at the Prophet *Elisha's* Advice of washing seven times in the River *Jordan*

*Jordan* for the cleansing of his Leprosy : Yet, by the Trial of it (upon infinitely meaner Motives than the Prophet's Words were) he found himself healed, and became a Profelyte to *Elisba's* God for ever. And may all, that either wilfully or ignorantly have neglected this their Christian Baptism, by some compassionate Providence of God, be brought to a sense of their desperate Mistake also, and hasten to perform this indispensable Condition of the Covenant of Grace ; in which Covenant and in our performing every known Condition of it, all the Hope of our Salvation lies. But,

2. This Example of *St. Peter's* Practice should give a startling Alarm (one should think) to another sort of Men amongst you also ; who by no means would be thought to be unbaptized Christians, because the Scripture speaks so much of a Baptism enjoined by the Son of God ; but forasmuch as a Baptism of the Spirit is upon many different Occasions mention'd there also ; that Baptism alone, they claim by a peculiar Title to themselves, and by heat of Imagination are so assured and confident that the Holy Ghost has baptized every one of them, that they are not to be convinc'd by *St. Peter's* Reasoning or Practice in the

the Case, that they need any other sort of Baptism whatsoever.

In which lamentable Delusion of theirs, I think you can't but evidently see and wonder at their unaccountable Opinion and Practice in these two particular Instances.

1. That they can't pretend to give any such Proof or Testimony of their being baptized by the Holy Ghost as the Family of *Cornelius* actually did, of whom the Scripture it self says, that *All about them were astonished to see the Gifts of the Holy Ghost poured out upon them \**, and as a Demonstration of it, *heard them speak with Tongues* (such as they had never learnt to be sure) *and glorified God in them.* And,

2. That though they could do so, or their unwarrantable Conceit were true; yet still by their Contempt of the Church's Baptism, they would stand in open Defiance to the Authority of this inspir'd Apostle of our Lord, who commanded his Disciples to be admitted into Covenant with God by *Water-Baptism*, even after he himself had own'd, that they were baptized by the Holy Ghost; *Can any Man forbid Water* (saith he) *that these*

\* Acts x. 45, 46.

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*should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord.*

Such as will thus shut up their Eyes against so clear a Beam of Light which the Sun of Righteousness gives us in the Gospel, and will walk in Paths of their own finding out; though *Christ*, and his Apostles, and the Church of God in all Ages, mark out the only true one for them; all I can say is, love them, pity them, meekly admonish and pray for them, as Friends, Neighbours and Brethren, in our common Nature together, though not in Faith and Truth with us. But into their Secrets (O my Brethren) enter not, and unto their solemn Assemblies unite not your selves, as you tender your eternal Interest in the Covenant of Grace (upon which all our Christian Hope must stand) for this fundamental Condition of that Covenant is not there. And thus far of the first Condition mentioned, our holy Baptism.

The next in Order, as they lie before us, is our Christian Faith.

The absolute Necessity of which Grace is such, that every one must see, no Foundation can be laid for any of the follow-

following Conditions without it; for that we should do any thing towards our Salvation, before we are conscious of our Wants, and believe we have a Saviour, and his All-sufficiency to save us too, is little to be hoped for, and as vain to persuade a reasonable Man to do. Here it is therefore that our Christian Faith begins; we must heartily believe, what the first Christian Preacher teaches us, that God the Father has exalted the crucify'd *Jesus* to his own right Hand in Heaven, and made him both Lord and *Christ*; which in the full Sense and Meaning of it; is this; we must give the utmost Consent of our Hearts (without Reserve, Doubt, or wavering in the Case) to this infallibly revealed Truth, that the Man *Christ Jesus*, so miraculously born, as the holy Evangelists relate it to us; so wonderful in all the Works and Miracles of his Life, so transcending all the Wisdom of the World in the Excellency of his Doctrine; and by his own Choice (for the sake of us miserable Sinners) so shamefully treated, and put to Death upon the Cross at last; was also no less than the eternal Son of God, and Saviour of the World, united in one and the same Person to our frail mortal Nature, for this very

Purpose only of our Redemption, and without whose Satisfaction to the Justice of the Father, for our Rebellion against his Laws, we must have lain under God's Displeasure for ever, and perish'd in our Sins.

This I may call the Fountain-Head of our Christian Faith, and if we don't feel this Spring of Truth flowing free and clear within our Hearts, to the full Conviction of our Souls in every Part of it, we can have no true Faith at all in us. That is, unless we believe, and sensibly feel within our Consciences, that we are lost and undone Creatures, if left to the Corruption of our Nature, and to the sinful Inclinations of our Lusts, Appetites and Passions within us; and therefore stand in need of some powerful Help from Heaven, to save us from the miserable Effects and Consequences of them: And moreover, that the crucify'd *Jesus* was such an All-sufficient Saviour, sent through the infinite Compassion of our merciful God, to take away the Guilt of all past Transgressions from every repenting Sinner; to teach us the sure way how to correct and overcome those dangerous and fatal Inclinations of our Nature; and withal to purchase Grace and the Gifts of God's  
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holy Spirit from above, for a perfect and sufficient Help to us all for the time to come : So that our sincere Endeavours hereafter should be able to perform every Condition, which the new Covenant of Grace (seal'd by the Blood of that Divine *Jesus*, made Man, and dying for us) does require of us: Unless we thus believe, I say, we can have no saving Faith in us. And the sure Marks for knowing whether such a Faith be in us, or no, are such as these.

1. A very humble and mean Opinion of our selves; considering what wretched and unprofitable Creatures we are, even when we have done the best we can do, if we had no other Hope but in our own Worth, and in our poor Performances alone. So that all spiritual Pride, Self-conceit, or exalting our selves above our Brethren, in a vain Opinion of being more holy or righteous than they, is a bad Symptom that this Seed of true Faith has not taken root in our Hearts.

2. Another Mark is this, that we feel the Love of God (our Redeemer) increasing every Day more and more within us, and strongly moving us every

Time we bend our Knees before him either in our Closet or the Church, to pour forth our Praises and Thanksgivings to him, with all the Ardours of Zeal and Devotion, that we possibly can raise in our Hearts ; for giving us so Almighty a Saviour, who is sufficient to strengthen all our Weaknesses for us, and to deliver us from all the Miseries, which our fallen Condition would otherwise bring upon us. For what less Effects than these, can any one imagine such a Faith must produce ; who considers Death eternal, and the endless Miseries of Hell (without the Benefit of a Saviour) to be the certain Punishments of Sin ; as the Word of God does positively assure us they are. And,

3. And lastly, the same Faith would make every sincere Christian (of what Capacity soever he be) chearfully and readily set about the Performance of every Condition in the Covenant of Grace, without Murmuring or Discouragement, at any seeming Difficulty to Flesh and Blood in any of them ; if he duly weigh'd the all-powerful Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, dearly purchased by the Son of God for him, and faithfully promised by the Father, to all that will devoutly pray for it,  
and

and set in earnest about working out their Salvation, and how much more when they are infallibly assured besides, that all the Joys of Heaven are prepared for such obedient Believers.

What remains of the Conditions, not yet spoken to, I proceed to lay before you now.

And the next I mention'd to you is *Repentance*; the Reasonableness and Necessity of which Condition, is founded in the Nature and Attributes of God himself, who is a Party in this Covenant with us (for 'tis a Covenant between God and Men: ) And forasmuch as every Christian's natural Opinion of God, as well as God's own Revelation of himself, proclaim him to be of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, nor can any Sin dwell with him; it is hopeless to think, we should keep in Covenant with him, so long as we are chargeable with *unrepented* or *unforgiven* Sins. I mention these two Sorts of Sins here, because some are blotted out and forgiven already through the great Atonement of the Cross of *Christ*; whereas others are not to be forgiven but upon this Condition alone, which we are now upon, a hearty and sincere Repentance for them. The  
Sins.

Sins immediately forgiven us upon Account of the Son of God's suffering on the Cross for us, are such Defects, in the very best Actions of Men, as fall short of that perfect Righteousness, wherein God created Man at first, or can't come up to the Holiness of his divine Laws; for since the Fall of *Adam*, none of his degenerate Posterity can attain to such Perfection of Nature, or such unspotted Purity of Life here: and therefore to satisfy the Justice of the Father for what the Apostacy of our first Parents made us so incapable of doing, in order to be happy for evermore, as from the first Creation he intended us to be; the ever blessed Son of God compassionately undertook to make up for us, by a Mystery of Love and Sufferings, not to be thought of without Wonder, Praise, and Adoration, by all Sons of Men. Nor did he barely answer for such impracticable Duties only, but purchased Grace besides (as you have heard before) to strengthen our infeebled Nature to the full, for the Performance of every Duty which is still requir'd of us, by that new Covenant of Grace he contracted with the Father for us; bringing them all within the Compass of our own Power and Will; provided  
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we will use the favourable Means he has prescribed to us, which are the very Conditions I am now explaining to you. And amongst them, none shews the Merits and Compassion of our Suffering Lord for our sakes, to be so compleat and full, as this Condition of *Repentance* doth: For after bringing all within our own Power, and therefore leaving us without Excuse, if we would not purchase Heaven, and escape Damnation, by doing all that we should and could do; still, being farther touch'd with a Feeling of our Infirmities, and knowing the World, the Flesh and the Devil, might by Surprise, Subtlety, or strong Temptations, betray, even pious and good Men, to some Act or Acts of Sin, which in themselves are of a damnable Nature; and moreover, some tender conscientious Sinners, willing to recover themselves and return to God, might fear their numerous and notorious Sins could never be forgiven; for these Reasons our compassionate Redeemer made *Repentance* one Condition of his Covenant with the Father for us, that neither good Men, overtaken by the Force of Temptations, nor even wicked Men for any Sins that are past, should irrecoverably be lost, if they would

would but timely and sincerely repent, of what they have so dangerously done on one Side, and so desperately on the other.

And now, to make these Advantages of Repentance of happy Use to you all; I shall shew you at large, in what Manner it is to be perform'd.

And the first Step we take towards it is, Self-Examination; not a slight, superficial one, with a transient reflecting Thought or two, and so have done; it must be strict, solemn, serious and often too. In every vacant half Hour, at least, ever and anon (either before the Business of our Calling begins, or when 'tis fairly over) we should retire, and ask our Memory and Consciences, this important Question, What have the remarkable Sins or Failings of our Life been? And that in Respect of all our known Duties to God, our Neighbour, and our selves. As for Instance, have we neglected our daily Prayers at Home? Or the more solemn Worship of God, in his own House (the Church) when openly call'd upon to take Care of our own Souls, and honour him there? Whether his holy Word and Sacraments have been duly valued by us (as necessary Means of Grace, and that, of his  
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own Appointment, and without which, we shall have great Grounds to fear, that little of his true Grace will be in us ; ) for if we slight to seek him where he has promised to be found, 'tis no great Wonder if we live without him in the World.

Other Enquiries concerning our Duty to God should be made, when we examine our Consciences for the Discovery of our Sins ; namely, whether we feel such a Belief and Fear within us of his terrible Judgments denounced against Sinners, as to stand in Awe and tremble at the deliberate Commission of any known Sin against him ? Or give such full Credit to his great and glorious Promises of everlasting Happiness to such as keep his Commandments, as to check our own Appetites, part with present Interest, Pleasures, or Possessions in the World (if Providence calls us to it) in a full Assurance and steady Expectation of them ? And divers such like Queries fall under this Head ; all relating to the profound Reverence and Honour we owe to God, and all Things belonging to him, which your own Christian Principles will naturally suggest to you : and therefore I proceed,

2. To hint such Enquiries to you, as relate

relate to your Duty to your Neighbour ; namely, how sincere, just, and upright you have been in all your Trade and Dealings with them ? How charitable to help, succour and comfort them in all their Distresses, Wants or Troubles whatsoever, to the best of your Abilities ? How tender of their Reputation and good Name, by not slandering, backbiting, or speaking evil of any, or giving easy Credit to others that do so ? How dutiful to Parents, Masters, Magistrates, and all that God himself has set over you in Church or State ? How careful to breed up your Children, and instruct your Servants in the Fear and Nurture of the Lord ? With sundry other obvious Duties of Love and Obedience ; for which I choose to refer you to the excellent Catechism of our Church ; which in few Words, but every one of them of exceeding Weight and Moment to you, does teach you all to the full. And the like I may say, of the

3. And last Enquiry also, concerning our Duty to our selves ; for there we are awfully admonish'd by the Church of God, of the strict Obligation our most holy Religion lays upon us all, to keep our Bodies in Soberness, Temperance, and Chastity : And if any Christi-

an Duty calls for a strict Examination of ourselves in order to Repentance, this may be said more loudly to do so, in these profligate and licentious Times of ours ; wherein 'tis dreadful to observe and hear how the crying Sins of Drunkenness, Riot, and Intemperance ; Wantonness, Adultery, Fornication, and the like, do openly (and well nigh in Boast and Triumph, I may say) abound and reign amongst Men : but should the Evidence of Conscience accuse any Christian of the Guilt of these Sins ; the one only hopeful Way of Recovery and Pardon for them, before the Decree of God issue out against him, is an immediate bitter Sorrow, Shame, Grief, and Self-Condernation in his own Heart, at every Remembrance of them ; for this may open a Door for true Repentance to come in, and in due Time to be perfected in him, which will make the Promise of the Covenant to belong to him then. But for any Man to be conscious of such Sins within his own Breast, and yet be wholly careless and unconcern'd about them ; to know the Guilt justly chargeable upon him ; and not be apprehensive, in the least, of any Judgment that attends him ; nay, can live perhaps in a daily Habit of

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Drunkenness, Wantonness, or any such like Sins forementioned ; and neither see nor fear any Danger that his immortal Soul is brought into by them ; these are sad and certain Tokens of a reprobate Mind and a harden'd Heart ; which the most favourable Conditions of the Covenant can afford no Hope or Comfort to, so long as it continues so : Because there is no Way yet made for Repentance to take Place there, upon which the Benefit of all the rest depends ; *Except you repent, you shall perish* \*, said he that seal'd the Covenant for us.

I proceed then to that second Part of Repentance, just now intimated to you, which is a *godly Sorrow* at Heart, for all those Sins, which *Self-Examination* has freshly brought into the penitent Sinner's Mind. St. Paul speaks of such a Sorrow as this, and attributes such Virtue to it, that *godly Sorrow* (says he) *works Repentance to Salvation never to be repented of* †. A Character ! which would make every Man impatient with himself, till he sorrowed after such a

\* Luke xiii. 15. † 2 Cor. vii. 10.

Manner: For all Men sadly know, they have need of Repentance; and every one wishes so to repent here, as to need no farther Sorrow for his Sins, when 'twill be too late, hereafter; but that his Transgressions might be pardoned, and his Salvation secure, before the great Day of the Lord's Visitation comes: And since this godly Sorrow St. *Paul* speaks of, is the true Seed of all those blessed Fruits so desirable and happy for Man, as to prevent all the Miseries which the forbidden Fruit brought on *Adam* and his Posterity (taking in the Merits of *Christ's* Sufferings with it) I think I shall need say no more for your full Instruction in this Point, than to examine with you the several Particulars the great Apostle prescribes, for making this penitential Godly Sorrow an effectual Cure for the Sins of Men.

And such as are universally necessary to make every Sinner's Repentance acceptable to God, and beneficial to themselves, are these:

I. A religious Anger at themselves, or even *Indignation*, (as the Apostle's Word is) for having led such unaccountable Lives, as habitual Sinners do;

which upon their own Reflection alone, they find is little likely to gain them any true Credit with Men, and if the Scripture is believ'd, will surely kindle the Wrath of an Almighty God against them. This alone would make an ingenuous Temper not a little offended, and that directly at itself; to think he is every Day losing Esteem and Honour, by his own Act and Deed, both with God and all good Men. But as many as are not lost so far as to forget that they are reasonable Creatures too, must have infinitely greater Cause of Indignation at themselves, to consider that God their Maker once stamp'd his own most holy Image upon their Souls, on Purpose to distinguish them from all the viler Parts of his Creation, and to take them into Heaven at last; and that they are blotting out that inestimable Image of his, and with their own Hands too, as fast as they can: For every wilful Sin they commit, does manifestly do so; whether those of lesser Observation (yet black with Guilt, and hateful in the Eyes of Heaven and Men) such as are Envy, Hatred, Malice and Revenge; all false, deceitful, cruel, or uncharitable Behaviour towards one another; and more  
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notoriously still, those fatal Sins against our own Bodies; Drunkenness, Adultery, Fornication, and carnal Uncleaness, of every kind; by all which Sins, unhappy Souls, who can tamely allow themselves in them, are poorly degenerating from a Nature, little lower than the Angels, into that of the meanest Creatures, who have nothing else but mere bodily Sense and Motion in them. To which, if we add the positive Decree of Heaven against them, that *they who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God\**. Men must think but little sure, and much less Hopes is there, of their even coming to Repentance, if by Self-examination, they find themselves thus accessible to their own miserable Condition, and yet go easily on, not offended in the least at themselves, or have any sort of penitential Indignation at their dangerous and shameful Ways. And thus is a religious Anger and Indignation at our selves a necessary Step to that godly Sorrow, which the Apostle tells us, will work Repentance to Salvation, never to be repented of.

2. A second Branch of it is, an awful

\* Gal. v. 21.

Fear of what will follow afterwards, if Men repent not of their Sins ; and he that is appointed to be Judge of quick and dead at the general Resurrection, has left such a Sentence upon Record in the Gospel, to be pronounc'd upon impenitent Sinners at that Day, as 'tis hard to repeat only, and not to tremble, *Go ye cursed (says he) into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels* \*. A Punishment grounded on the eternal Justice and almighty Power of a provoked God, and the immortal Nature of the offending Sinner's Soul ; who had defy'd all the Threatnings of that Divine Power and Justice, during all his Day of Grace, that is, as long as ever he lived ; and moreover had slighted all the tender Offers of God's Love and Mercy to him too ; choosing wilfully to enjoy the poor Pleasures of Sin for a Moment, rather than the richest Rewards of Repentance and Obedience to his God ; though they were assured to him to be no less, than the fulness of Joy and perfect Happiness in the glorious Mansions of Heaven for evermore. And in that fearful Sentence abovementioned,

\* Mat. xxv. 41.

tioned, are center'd and contain'd at once, all the Fears that can be thought of to move the most harden'd Sinner living to a melting Sorrow for his Sins. If they prevail not, there's little hope that any lesser Instances of the Danger he is in should raise that penitential Passion of a godly Sorrow in him; wherefore leaving him to the unreveal'd (and therefore unexpected) Compassion of his Judge, I pass

3. To another Branch of Godly Sorrow, which in the Apostle's Account, is call'd, *A Vebement Desire*; being an Affection of the Heart, implying the inward Ardour and passionate Concern of a truly penitent Soul, to undo (as far as it is possible) all the Evil that he had ever done; and to make his Peace with his offended God, tho' by all the hardest Means that the Gospel of *Christ* should require of him: A kind of holy Impatience within him, to become a new Man; taking Pleasure in nothing so much, as to feel Sin dye, and Grace revive in him: And accordingly is cautious of all the dangerous Company he had used before, and in new modelling the careless Course of his former Conversation, and so far taking

taking leave of the World, as to follow the necessary Duties of his Calling, with a prudent and moderate Care only ; indifferent to the great Improvements of it, leaving all that to Povidence alone, without uneasy Carking or Solitude about it. And lastly, he is altogether cold and indifferent to whatsoever is call'd pleasurable Pastime, Jollity, or merry Diverfion by the World ; delighting rather to rerire, read, meditate and pray, that he might converse most and principally with God and good Men. And these happy Marks of a true penitent Sinner, will bear Witness to his *Vehement Desire* of becoming a new Creature, and being surely accompany'd with a Godly Sorrow for his Sins will make a large Advance in that Repentance to Salvation never to be repented of.

4. Another Fruit of Godly Sorrow, in the holy Text before us, is *Christian Zeal*, which naturally springs from the two foregoing Branches of a real Anger at our selves for the Guilt and Folly of our former Ways, and a vehement Desire to recover our selves, to the utmost of our Power hereafter : For the penitent Sinner finding that his Hatred of a  
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vicious Life and his Love to God ran very low with him, whilst he allowed himself to live easy in a Course of notorious Sins, which were so strictly and plainly forbidden by the Laws of God; his Heart is now doubly inflamed with a holy Detestation and Abhorrence of his former presumptuous and unreasonable Course of Life, and his Passions rise so high at nothing that befalls him from without, as at the sad Remembrance of the wilful Sins he has so easily and so often committed, without the least Remorse of Conscience for the same. In such Instances as these, penitential Zeal exerts it self: And I can't but take notice to you, that all this while it has peculiar Reference to nothing else, but barely the spiritual Use and Benefit of the Penitent himself. His Neighbour is not troubled with his Zeal, as in many Examples of less sincere Zealots it is: His Friends, Neighbours and Brethren, may perhaps in proper Seasons reap the profitable Fruits of an affectionate Admonition from him (but a very calm and gentle one to be sure, and that in perfect Charity to their Souls;) tho' this true Zealot has no Self-conceit of any extraordinary Grace in himself, and therefore is much less guilty  
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of reproaching, despising, or thinking little of his Neighbour (but this only by the by :) The farther Zeal of a true Penitent is chiefly and principally towards God ; by whose good Spirit he is suppos'd now to be awaken'd from his spiritual Lethargy, and to bethink himself how careless, cold and unaffected he has used to be, both in his private and publick Office of Devotion ; nay, peradventure has prophaned God's holy Name by his customary Swearing and Cursing in familiar Conversation, and given Occasion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme and speak evil of all Professors of Religion in general : The doleful Remembrance of all which things now wounds his Soul to the quick, and makes his Heart bleed for them. And the only Hopes he has of being ever pardon'd for them, is for ever hereafter to be eminently strict and punctual in his Attendances upon God, both in his Closet and the Church ; and therefore raises his Heart to the highest Pitch of Devotion, as well in one as t'other, as the most awful Sense of that tremendous Majesty he worships, can bring him to ; joining a stedfast Faith to it, in all his Threats and Promises ; with a bitterness of

of Heart within him for daring so presumptuously to provoke him, as he had done, and an undissembled Condemnation of himself also, as the vilest and most contemptible of all the Sons of Men. And herein appears that excellent Zeal indeed, which the Apostle mentions as a genuine Fruit of Godly Sorrow for our Sins.

5. The last I shall mention, is *Self-Revenge*: I call it so, because all other Revenge is a damnable Sin; and therefore the Apostle doubtless meant no otherwise by the Revenge in his Text. Now Self-Revenge is nothing else but the Sinner's chastening himself, in Hope he may be less severely chasten'd of the Lord; and therefore implys in it such penitential Practices as these; Self-Denial, Mortification, a crucifying the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts thereof; by prudent Fastings, Watchings, temperate and abstemious Living, thwarting his strongest Appetites to every sensual Pleasure, and (to testify his Contempt of the World) by as liberal and expensive Alms as his Condition will admit of; in a Word, by giving a general Bill of Divorce to all the Sins he has been most

most in Love with throughout the former Course of his Life ; labouring, whatsoever the Conflict between Flesh and Spirit may be in him, to bring himself to as settled a Habit of the contrary Course of virtuous living at last, as Self-Examination tells him, he had allowed himself in, for gratifying his viler, vicious and most fatal Inclinations before. This is properly Self-Revenge, and is one of the most fruitful Branches of Godly Sorrow, which bringeth forth Repentance to Salvation, never to be repented of.

I have now explain'd at large to you, the three first necessary Conditions requir'd of every Christian by the Covenant of Grace ; namely, Baptism, Faith and Repentance, in every Part and Circumstance of them. Excuse the Tedi-ousness of my Pen in it (my dear Brethren) for Matter rose upon me beyond the Bounds of that Brevity I first proposed.

The Conditions, still remaining, according to the primitive Pattern I laid before you, are of easier Apprehension to us all (though of equal Necessity with

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the rest ; ) and therefore I may safely make, I hope, a speedier Dispatch of them all.

The next Condition then is this ; that every Christian must continue stedfast in the Apostles *Doctrine*. And, God be thank'd, the Church we have been happily baptized into, affords us all the charitable Helps, that we can stand in need of, for performing this Condition ; having preserv'd for us a short and plain Copy of the Articles of Faith, those Embassadors of the Son of God publish'd to the World, in the noted Form of Doctrine, called for that Reason the Apostles Creed, or in familiar Language, Our Belief : And this it has explain'd again to us (as some Hereticks gave Occasion for it) by primitive and ancient Comments upon it, without a Tittle of any fundamental Change, in two other like Forms of Apostolical Doctrine, called the *Nicene* and *Athanasian Creed* : To the Substance of which authentick Forms of sound Words (so often repeated in the Service of the Church) keep closely, I beseech you, and forego not one single Point of them ; whether it be of the three coeternal and coequal Persons in the ever-blessed Trinity asserted

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there ;

there ; or of one true Apostolical Church founded by the Order of the Son of God amongst Men (of which I shall speak more in the following Head ; ) or of the Forgiveness of our Sins, for *Christ's* Sake, on the Conditions of the Covenant of Grace, or of the General Resurrection of all Men, or of a strict Judgment to come, and of a Life everlasting in Happiness or Misery for good and bad Men : Forego not, I say, one single Point of these Apostolical Truths, upon account of any arrogant Scruple of proud Reason against the Mystery of your incomprehensible Creator's sure and certain Revelations ; and much less upon the profane and vain Babblings (to use the Apostle's Words) of Men of perverse Minds, who seek to turn away plain-hearted Believers, from the Acknowledgment of the Truth ; But upon this solid Foundation, establish your Christian Faith, and waver not, and you shall perform the principal Part of this Condition of the Covenant of continuing stedfast in the Apostle's Doctrine, as you are requir'd to do.

And as to the other Part of their Doctrine, relating to a strictly moral and  
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holy Life, the Church has doubly provided to instruct you thoroughly in that also. 1. By preserving as faithfully for you all the genuine Records and Writings both of the Evangelists and Apostles themselves in the New Testament; as I shew'd you she had done their Creed before: And 2. by drawing up ready to your Hand, a Summ of all the saving Doctrines contain'd in those inspired Scriptures, in her most excellent Catechism: Read, study, and ingraft into your Hearts then, the plain Doctrine of the Sacraments of *Christ* there, together with your Duty to God and your Neighbour, so compendiously, and yet completely represented to you in it, steering the Course of your Lives and Conversations by it, and doubt not but you continue as stedfast in the Apostles Doctrine, as the first of Christians did.

The three last Conditions of the Covenant will fall under one general Consideration; and having been longer than expected in the rest, I shall make one joyn't Explication of them all; and you will find indeed the Nature of the Things themselves requires it should be so.

For the Particulars are these, that e-

very Christian must continue stedfastly in Fellowship or Communion with the Apostles ; and in breaking of Bread ; and in Prayers with them. And you'll be apt to think perhaps, at first hearing, that these Duties seem so peculiarly belonging to the first Converts, who lived in the same Time with the Apostles themselves, that it should be impracticable to be done in our Days, who live so many hundred Years after them. But assure yourselves (my beloved Brethren) that the Duties are as practicable still, and the Obligation lies as strong upon us in these latter Ages of the Church to do so, as it lay upon any primitive Believers who were cotemporary with 'em ; and the Obligation is founded upon no less a Bottom than our Saviour *Christ's* infallible Promise to those Apostles, that he would be with them always to the End of the World : And three or four Things carefully consider'd, will open this Truth very clearly to you.

1. Consider then, that our Saviour's ministerial Commission, to teach and baptize all Nations, was solely and wholly given to those very Apostles at his last Fare-well to the World. So St. *Matthew*

tells

tells us, (chap. xxviii. v. 16. to the End of that Chapter.)

2. That by sending them forth, as the Father had sent him, (*Job. xx. 21.*) he both enjoyn'd them to publish the Gospel as long as they lived, and authorised them to ordain their Successors for the same Purpose, and to govern the Churches before they died. Each Part of which Apostolical Commission *St. Paul* (who had a right Hand of Fellowship with them all) eminently put in Practice by passing through whole Kingdoms to convert them to Christianity, and by ordaining *Elders*\* (that is, Ministers of the Churches) in every Place where he found them wanting; and moreover, giving full Power to such as he assign'd the larger Jurisdictions, to ordain spiritual Governours and Ministers to succeed them likewise: As appears by his strict Charge, to *Timothy* (whom he had made Bishop of *Ephesus* before) in these Words, *The Things which thou hast heard of me, says he, amongst many Witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also.*†

\* Acts xiv. 23. † 2 Tim. ii. 22.

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And in the same Manner to *Titus* again (whom he had made Bishop of the Island of *Crete*) *For this Cause*, said he, *left I thee at Crete, that thou shouldst set in Order the Things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every City\**. And remember,

3. That to no other Persons whatsoever amongst the Thousands of Followers and Disciples of the blessed *Jesus*, was such a governing and ministerial Power in the Churches intrusted by him besides.

From these Considerations, duly weigh'd, we must see, that the Holy *Jesus*, (that divine Lord of Unity and Peace) manifestly intended his Church upon Earth, to be but one; and that an universal Apostolical Church too (as our venerable Creeds call it) or as the Holy Ghost styles it, a spiritual Building, raised upon the Foundation (not of any single Apostle) but of *all the Apostles and Prophets* †; each being a Pillar equally strong to bear up any Part of the whole, which should be built upon it;

\* *Tit. i. 5.* † *Eph. ii. 20.*

And *Jesus Christ* himself, the only single Corner-Stone, who by the Truths which he revealed for our Belief, and by the Doctrine he taught for our Instruction to eternal Life, and by his own Spirit promised to abide in this Church for ever, unites the whole into one. And judge ye now (my beloved Brethren) in what other Manner the blessed *Jesus* should make good his solemn Promise to his Apostles, that *he would be with them to the End of the World* (who notwithstanding were mortal, and dyed by Martyrdom or natural Death, like other Men) but by continuing present for ever with this Apostolical Church, which is so evident a Plant, you see, sprung up from the genuine Seed of their Doctrine, and of the ministerial Authority derived successively from *them* alone? And highly remarkable to this Purpose it is, and seems to speak our blessed Saviour's own Meaning directly to be so; that, in the same Breath, wherewith he utter'd their ministerial Commission to them, he gave them this Promise, without a Tittle of Interruption between them, of *being with them always to the End of the World* \*. Con-

\* Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.

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sult *St. Matthew's Text*, and you'll find it to be so.

And now to apply this to the present Point in Hand. It will follow from hence, that whosoever shall hold Communion with a Christian Church, which has these Testimonials of truly Apostolical Doctrine taught amongst them, and is under the Government and Ministry of spiritual Rulers and Pastors, deriving their Authority by successive Imposition of Hands, and Prayer, (after the Example of the Apostles themselves) from that very original Commission of *theirs*, given out from the Mouth of the Son of God to them; he may truly be said to fulfil these last and great Conditions of the Covenant of Grace, of continuing as stedfastly in the Fellowship of the Apostles, as their very cotemporary Converts did; and besides, that *Christ* himself will, according to the true Meaning of his faithful Promise, be ever present in such Assemblies, to hear their hearty Prayers, and bless every Ordinance of his own Institution, that shall be celebrated there.

And, to conclude this Head, and dismiss the Explication of all the Conditions

ons requir'd of you, by the Covenant of Grace, to make your Peace with God ; I shall only leave this serious Admonition with you all : That whereas the merciful Providence of God has, through the Care and Wisdom of our venerable *Reformers* (not many Generations past) manifestly settled and establish'd here, such a truly Apostolical Church, both in Form and Doctrine, in this our native Land, agreeing with the earliest Ages of Christianity itself ; wherein the Word of God is the avowed Rule and Authority for all the Doctrine she teaches us, and both her spiritual Governours and subordinate Ministers derive the Character and Commission of their holy Functions from that original Grant and Precedent of the holy Apostles themselves (set forth to you from their own Writings but now) by a successive Imposition of Hands, and Prayers, unto our own Times ; as the Records and History of the Church would inform the Curious ; and the visible Conformity alone (I should think) of her Constitution to the Apostolical Model in the New Testament, would give all reasonable Satisfaction to an ingenuous Mind ; since such an Apostolical Church, I say,

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is thus planted amongst us, and visibly enough to be distinguish'd from all counterfeit Images and plausible Appearances of any thing that should be call'd a Church besides, by the genuine Marks and essential Properties of it, which I laid before you now ; I can't but strictly warn, and affectionately conjure you all (my endear'd Brethren) to keep close, conscientiously steady to the Fellowship and Communion of such a Church, into which, by God's peculiar Goodness, well nigh all of you have happily been baptized ; by attending constantly to the Ministry of God's holy Word there ; by partaking of the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper from the Hands of such Apostolical Deputies and Successors, as apparently dispense those saving Mysteries to you, with a warrantable Authority for what they do ; and that you never cease to joyn in publick Prayers with such, so long as they dispense the genuine Doctrine of *Christ* and his Apostles to you. And this, as you tender the sacred Unity of that Church, which your blessed Saviour had so much at Heart for ever to continue *one* ; or, as you desire his Presence and Blessing upon every publick Act of

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Worship and Devotion, that you pay to him ; for his solemn Promise, you see, of not forsaking his Apostles to the End of the World, does most immediately belong to such Christian Assemblies alone.

And now I have explain'd to you, in the Sincerity and Affection of my Heart, every particular Head I first engaged my self to speak to, by representing to you,

I. What the saving of our Souls means, and under that Head, how much Help the very Light of Nature, and the inward Admonitions of our Consciences do afford us towards it.

II. What sure Proofs and undeniable Authority we Christians have, by the Son of God himself condescending to come down from Heaven, and dwelling amongst Men, of the Certainty of an endless Life to come, and of the vast Concerns that every one of us have therein. And,

III. What Conditions God requires on our Part, in that Covenant of Grace which

which was seal'd by the Blood of our Divine Saviour for us, in Order to the saving of our Souls for ever. God of his Mercy grant a Blessing upon my weak Endeavours, for the spiritual Good and eternal Welfare of you all.

In Order to which Success, so affectionately wish'd by me, I promised to recommend some few Rules at the last, for the better performing all the Conditions required of you, and for compassing that great End of dying comfortably, and being safe and happy for ever and ever. And I shall be short in these, because the necessary Means and Conditions of it, are at large described before. And,

I. The first Rule I recommend to you, is to set a due Value upon your Time. The Affairs of every honest Calling in the World, will and must require a great Part of it; yet that may be sanctify'd too, by mixing devout Ejaculations, ever and anon, to Heaven, in the midst of it. The Necessities of Nature, such as Food, Sleep, Clothing, and the like, will justly claim another large Portion of your Time also; yet these, like the former, may

may be improv'd to a Part of our Religion likewise ; by a regular Temperance, moderate Rest, and an humble Decency only in our Dress and Attire. But all this while, these are not directly a special Concern and Care for our immortal Souls ; and yet Eternity, either happy or miserable, depends upon our good or bad Use of our Time of Life here : And since those unavoidable Affairs and mere Wants of our mortal Nature, will take up so large a Part of the few Years the longest Liver of us all can attain to ; Judge ye, how unaccountable a thing it must be, for any Man living to spend in Vice and Vanity (as is too commonly seen) many and many of his useful leisure Hours of Life ? Not that every innocent Recreation for weary'd Nature, or a kind Visit to a Neighbour or Friend, in their proper Seasons should be counted so ; but by the needless Length, or too often indulging of them, we unhappily waste Opportunities, which we dearly want for the Benefit of our Souls. And this will appear the plainer by the Rules which follow. For,

II. The second Rule is this, That every Christian (even the busiest in the World) should industriously contrive to set apart

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Some void Spaces of the Day, be they more or less, according as their respective Condition shall be, for reading holy Scripture, for Meditation, and for Prayer : Otherwise, 'tis plain, their common Calling in the World (which at the utmost can but make Provision for a short and transitory Life) must utterly shut out and intirely destroy their *High Calling* in God, by which they are indispensably bound to serve and worship him, and by that Means alone, can make a hopeful Provision for all Eternity, and for the saving their Souls. The Jews themselves had Morning and Evening Sacrifices strictly injoyn'd them for every Day ; and moreover God commanded them farther, not only to keep his Laws in their own Hearts, but to teach them diligently to their Children also ; yea, to talk of them as they sat at Home, as they walked in the Way, when they lay down, and when they rose again ; so hopeles a thing, did that God who made us, foresee it would be, to think that Men should keep to any Religion at all, who did not daily worship, meditate, and pray ; and they who live without it, I wish they do not sadly find, how little of Religion they have ever had, when 'tis too late to know.

III. Another Rule is, that every Man would narrowly watch, and with a kind of jealous Care observe, that peculiar Sin, which sad Experience tells him, has, and does most easily beset him. Corrupt Nature indeed is miserably prone to every evil Way; but personal Constitution, unhappy Education, this or t'other peculiar Employment in the World, together with the Company, Examples and Temptations, which cleave close to a Man, or unhappily fall in his Way, not unufally betray, even a well-meaning Christian, to some particular Course of Sin, more dangerous to him, than the rest; which *St. Paul* calls, *the Sin that does so easily beset us* \*; whether it be Idleness, Drunkenness, Wantonness, customary Swearing, Wrath, Anger and fiery Passions, or the like; against which known Enemy of his Soul (be it which it will) he should put on the strongest Armour he possibly could, every Day of his Life; watch strictly against every Approach or suspicious Apprehension of it; stifle seriously the first Motion he feels within him towards it, by that absolute Domi-

\* Heb xii. 1.

nion, which God most surely gave to the Souls of Men over the Appetites and Lusts of the Flesh, at the first Creation, and will as surely now confirm it to them after their Redemption, if they lift up their Hearts affectionately to Heaven for it, and beg in Earnest for a seasonable Help from thence ; for this is the Benefit of that Gift of Grace, which was purchased for us, so dearly, upon the Cross.

IV. The fourth Rule I leave with you (and with which I shall conclude) is this, That you would make the four last Things, from whence the greatest Hopes and Fears of every Christian naturally flow (namely, Death, Judgment, and the Rewards and Punishments of another World) the familiar Subjects of your Thoughts and Meditations, as often as you can. A sensible Knowledge of these Things is not to be had, till they actually come upon us, and then the eternal Decree will be past, and the clearest Knowledge of them will be of no Benefit to us at all ; for as Death leaves us, so Judgment will find us : But by often thinking of them beforehand, we should have the strongest Motives to break off  
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any Course of Sin, and to lead a sober and religious Life, almost ever present to our Minds; that either Reason or Divine Revelation offer to the Sons of Men, to awe them from offending God, or endangering their own Souls: To be sure, the least they can learn by doing so, will be these following Lessons of Wisdom, which must highly conduce to their eternal Welfare in that Life to come.

I. That all the Delights and Pleasures of their bodily Senses, and all the comfortable Plenty of their Wealth and Possessions upon Earth (which are the utmost Hopes and Joys of a carnal Life, and of the mere Worldlings of every Kind) will by one Stroke of Death, shortly be cut off; their Bodies then turning into nauseous Putrefaction, wherein all their Sensuality lay; and their whole Person (Soul and Body) violently snatched away from all their dear Possessions, never to have a Moment's Use, or so much as a Sight of them any more; and this perhaps (as in the Case of the great Projector in the Gospel it was) before the next Night be over: At least, we must all own, that in Com-

parison of the long Eternity that follows, it can't be so far off, as the Evening of the shortest Winter-Day, whatever our Imaginations may conceive of the great Distance of ~~it~~. And this one would think should be of some Benefit to Men, if they went no farther than to meditate often upon Death alone. But then,

2. Thinking often of the Day of Judgment too, the very startling Preparations for it only, would rouse the greatest Libertine from his deepest Lethargy of Carelessness and Sin; whilst his Heart secretly listens to the Voice of God, thus speaking of it in the Holy Scriptures; That the Heavens above us shall pass away with a hideous Noise, at that Day; and the Elements about us melt with fervent Heat\*; and the Earth and all the Works therein, shall be burnt up; and then the Lord *Jesus* himself, with an Army of Angels about him, shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, sitting on a Throne of Glory, prepared for him in the Clouds†; and the shrill Trumpet of an Arch-Angel shall sound

\* 2 Pet. iii. 10.

† 1 Theff. iv. 16.

so loud, as to raise the Dead, great and small, from *Adam* unto that Day, out of their deep and darkeſt Graves; all to ſtand before the Judgment-Seat of their moſt holy Saviour and Almighty God to give an Account of all that they have done, thought, or ſpoken, throughout the Courſe of their whole Life, whether it be good or evil, and accordingly to hear an eternal Sentence pronounc'd upon them for it. And judge ye, if natural Conſcience alone could eaſily ſuffer a Man to lead an ill Life, who at the very Inſtant that he knowingly does amils, ſhould have a preſent Apprehenſion within him, of ſuch awful Truths as theſe.

And how much leſs, if he ſhould have often meditated on the everlaſting Rewards and Punishments of the Life to come? But for the Direction of your Meditations on the incomprehenſible Joys, and unexprefſible Miſeries of thoſe two laſt and endleſs States of Men, nothing can be added by Man, to what that divine Embaſſador from Heaven (the ever-blessed *Jeſus*) has deliver'd to us in his incomparable Sermons and heavenly Converſation whiſt he lived amongſt Men;  
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(and I have had Occasion to shew you that before.) For 'tis sure, the Gates of Heaven are not to be open'd to us, nor the Mouth of the bottomless Pit to be unseal'd, for Flesh and Blood to take a sensible Prospect of them, till the Sons of God, and Children of the wicked one, shall be respectively fit to be admitted into one or t'other, and to dwell for ever in them. Those unseen Mansions were created from the beginning to be of everlasting Duration; and the Happiness and Misery of them suited to the utmost Capacities of Angels and Men, for whom they were designed; and therefore not thoroughly to be comprehended by us, till this Mortal shall put on Immortality, and this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption; which will not be till our Resurrection from the Dead. 'Tis abundantly sufficient for our Encouragement to contend earnestly all our Life long, for the Bliss and Happiness of the one; and to warn us from falling wilfully into the Misery and Torments of the other; that both are assured to us by the Testimony of God himself, and of our Lord *Jesus Christ* his Son, to be infinite in their respective

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Natures, and everlasting in their Kinds :  
 And this is what the divine Goodness  
 has graciously vouchsafed to reveal to  
 us, and is the utmost indeed that our  
 present Condition can be capable of.

I'll conclude all therefore with the  
 Apostle's Use and Application to his  
 Christian Brethren, of this very Subject  
 we are now upon ; *Sceing all these  
 things* (says he) *shall be dissolved* ,  
 speaking of the visible World about us,  
*What manner of Persons ought you to  
 be in all holy Conversation and Godliness ?  
 Looking for, and hastening unto the com-  
 ing of the Day of God\**. And again,  
 with a repeated Zeal and Earnestness  
 in so important a Matter ; *Seeing ye  
 do look for such things, said he, be dili-  
 gent, that ye may be found of him in Peace,  
 without Spot and blameless †*. And this sets  
 forth the full of my Intention in every  
 foregoing Page of this friendly Letter to  
 you ; which has prov'd too tedious,  
 I fear, in the Variety of Matter con-  
 tain'd in it. Yet every Line, I'm sure,  
 with sincere Regard to your spiritual

\* 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12.

† V. 4.

and eternal Welfare, ever to be pray-  
ed for, as it always has been, by  
your near Relation in the Church of  
*Christ,*

**J. S.**

**F I N I S.**

**6 AP 58**

**W**THE Reader is desir'd to correct the  
following Error of the Press, and  
read thus, viz.

Page 6. Line 9. To save any thing in general which

